

(Strickland), neither known from West Africa, I chased it into a nearby mist-net. In the hand it was clearly a first-year *S. nisoria*, and the specimen is now in the Zoology Museum of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The bird was a male, with traces of body fat. It weighed 21.3 gms. at 07.30 hrs.; Williamson (1964, *Identification for Ringers*, 3: The Genus *Sylvia*. Brit. Trust Orn.) gives weights of 50 first-year autumn passage migrants in Scotland ranging from 18.8 to 31.0 gms., most between 20 and 25 gms. It had wing and bill lengths of 87 and 17.5 mm. respectively. Apart from primary 3 (ascending numbering) in the left wing being only two-thirds grown—presumably through an accident—the bird was in worn plumage with no trace of body moult.

This bird occurred at Malam'fatori after six days of exceptionally strong north-easterly winds, which abated only slightly during the afternoons and which might have blown the bird off course. *S. nisoria* migrates south-eastwards in autumn, from Europe to winter in south Arabia and north-east Africa (Williamson, *op. cit.*). The only records from north Africa are two specimens from Bahig, Egypt (55 kms. west-south-west of Alexandria)—one a very light, though "moderately fat", spring bird of 13.0 gms. (Hubbard and Seymour, 1968, *Ibis*: 576). South of the Sahara it is apparently unknown west of the Nile at about 12° N., 33° E. (Cave and MacDonald, 1954, *Birds of the Sudan*). It is unrecorded from north Africa west of Egypt, and south of the Sahara is apparently hitherto unrecorded west of the Sudan (Moreau, 1961, *Ibis*: 416, 588). However, birds from western breeding populations and those that occur regularly on passage in western Europe may well occur regularly as far west as Lake Chad. The occurrence of several east Africa-wintering species at Malam'fatori in autumn 1968—for example Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (Pontopp.) and Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (Güld.)—lends support to this idea.

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Greater Sandplovers *Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson at Lake Chad

by R. J. Dowsett

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On 2nd August, 1968, I shot a Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* on a sand beach on the Nigerian shore of Lake Chad at Malam'fatori (13° 37' N., 13° 20' E.). In the field it was a sandy coloured "sandplover", with a heavy dark bill, standing head and shoulders over associated Kittlitz's Sandplovers *C. pecuarius* Temminck and White-fronted Sandplovers *C. marginatus* Vieillot. It was extremely wild and I was unable to confirm in the field that it was *leschenaultii* rather than the similar Mongolian Sandplover *C. mongolus* Wagler. C. W. Benson of the University Museum, Department of Zoology, Cambridge and P. R. Colston of the Bird Room, British Museum (Natural History) compared the skin to series of *leschenaultii*, *mongolus* and the Caspian Plover

C. asiaticus Pallas, and concluded that it was undoubtedly *leschenaultii*. The specimen is now in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History).

Then on 21st August, 1968, R. H. Parker and I collected a second *C. leschenaultii* in the same place. It was alone, on an open sand beach. Identification of the specimen has been confirmed by R. Wagstaffe of Liverpool Museum. The specimen is now in the collection of the Zoology Museum, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The first bird was immature, in active body moult but with fresh remiges and rectrices. It weighed 77.5 gms. and had a wing length of 134 mm. (maximum chord). The second was a female with all but the outer three primaries and central pair of rectrices new, and no body moult. It had a good deal of body fat and weighed 82.5 gms., with wing of 139 mm.

These are the first records of the species from West Africa. It breeds in the eastern Palaearctic, and has been recorded throughout the year on the coasts of Egypt and eastern Libya, though with no proof of breeding (Etchécopar and Hüe, 1967, *Bds. of North Africa*: 215). It winters on coastal mud flats from the Red Sea to South and South-West Africa. It is quite common on islands off the east coast of Africa, particularly Malagasy, Aldabra and the Comoros (Benson, 1967, *Atoll Research Bull.* 118: 89). There are very few records of this species inland in Africa, and this is the first evidence of a trans-Saharan migration (Moreau, 1967, *Ibis*: 243).

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Isabelline Curlews and Turnstone in Eire

by Jeffery Harrison

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In view of the fact that records of albinism are comparatively rare in wading birds, three recent examples would seem worthy of recording.

Two of these concern the Curlew *Numenius arquata arquata*, both being seen on the shore close to Timoleague, Co. Cork, Eire, between 28th-30th September, 1968. These were virtually identical, being very pale, isabelline varieties, so pale as to look almost white, except for the primaries which were pale chestnut-brown. There was a slightly darker line through the eye, while some of the mantle feathers, wing-coverts and long tertials showed dark centres. The iris of one which was best seen (a female by its long bill) was a normal brown, the beak a paler brown than normal and the legs a pale pinkish-grey.

Although it seemed possible that the two were related, they did not go about together and were in fact only once seen together, when they crossed, flying in opposite directions. At low tide the female could always be found within a hundred yards along the same stretch of shoreline, in spite of having some ten miles of equally suitable shore to choose from, with other Curlews feeding all along it. It was thus rather interesting to note how restricted were the feeding grounds of this particular bird.

Mr. Bryan Sage has kindly allowed me to see his card index with reference